

SECTION 2 Questions 15–27

Read the text below and answer Questions 15–20.

HOW TO ORGANISE A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS CONFERENCE

To start with

Advance planning is the key to a hassle-free conference. The key players of a successful conference are the delegates, so identify the audience and then tailor the programme you are planning to their particular needs.

Where and when

The date and venue should then be chosen. These are often interdependent, and when choosing the date take into account the timing of similar regular events which may clash. Also consider holiday periods which may mean that people are away and so will not be able to attend.

When choosing a venue, check how easy it is to reach by train and plane etc. and the availability of parking for those driving. Visit the venue personally: consider the size of the main lecture hall and whether it is big enough for the anticipated number of delegates, then look into the potential of having breakout areas for separating into a number of groups for discussions. Then check whether there is a suitable lounge area for the tea/coffee breaks and an exhibition space for display stands if required.

Who

The next stage is to choose the speakers and invite them, making sure you give them ample notice so they are more likely to be available. Ask only those people that you know speak well. Do not try and speak yourself in addition to organising the conference, as this will be too demanding.

Contacting people

Let people know the date and venue by an early mailshot. This allows them, if they are interested, to put the date into their diaries. At the same time, contact all the speakers again, confirming their particular topic, the audio-visual aids which will be available and finding out their accommodation requirements. Ask them to provide a written summary of their presentation for distribution to delegates at the conference.

Final arrangements

Approximately 4–5 weeks before the conference, confirm the provisional numbers with the venue. Contact them again about two weeks prior to the conference to confirm final numbers, decide on menus and finalise the arrangements.

Prepare delegate packs to include a name badge, delegate list and programme. The venue should provide pads of paper and pens. Then prepare questionnaires for all delegates to complete at the end of the conference. Their responses will enable you to gauge the success of the conference and start planning the next one!